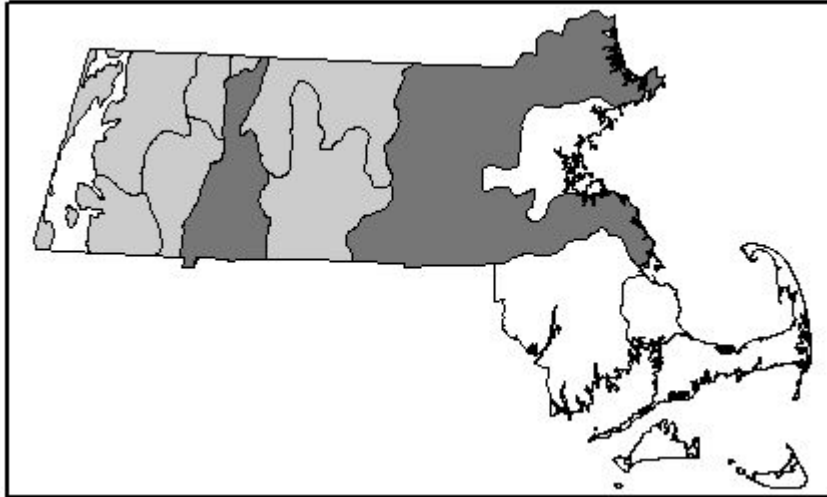


**Community Name:** RIDGETOP CHESTNUT OAK

**Community Code:** CT1A3A0000

**SRANK:** S4



**Concept:** Open forest of dry ridgetops, dominated by chestnut oak with an often dense understory of scrub oak, heaths or mountain laurel.

**Environmental Setting:** Dry upland sites with thin soil over acidic bedrock on ridges and upper south or southwest facing slopes. There tends to be deep oak leaf litter with slow decomposition.

**Vegetation Description:** The canopy is dominated, often completely, by chestnut oak (*Quercus prinus*). Associates include other oaks (black (*Q. velutina*), red (*Q. rubra*), scarlet (*Q. coccinea*), and/or white (*Q. alba*)), hickories (shagbark (*Carya ovata*) and pignut (*C. glabra*)), red maple (*Acer rubrum*), hemlock (*Tsuga canadensis*), and white and pitch pines (*Pinus strobus* and *P. rigida*). Red cedar (*Juniperus virginiana*), scrub oak (*Q. ilicifolia*), dwarf chinquapin oak (*Q. prinoides*), blueberries (*Vaccinium angustifolium* and *V. pallidum*), huckleberry (*Gaylussacia baccata*), and mountain laurel (*Kalmia latifolia*) often form dense thickets. The herbaceous layer is usually sparse, but includes false foxgloves (*Aureolaria flava*, *A. pedicularia*, and *A. virginica*), sedges (particularly *Carex pensylvanica*), bracken fern (*Pteridium aquilinum*), and wintergreen (*Gaultheria procumbens*).

**Associations:** Although fairly distinctive because of the ridgetop position, this is part of a continuum of dry, acidic communities that contain a variety of tree oak and pine species. More work is needed to define types.

**Habitat Values for Associated Fauna:** Chestnut oak acorns are particularly sought after by wildlife and are important food for white-tailed deer (*Odocoileus virginianus*), black bear (*Ursus americanus*), grey squirrels (*Sciurus carolinensis*), other small rodents, and Wild Turkeys (*Meleagris gallopavo*) and other birds. The understory of blueberries and huckleberries is used by many of these same species in areas with sufficiently large forests to provide all the habitat needs. Passerine birds of oak forests include Red-eyed Vireo (*Vireo olivaceus*), White-breasted Nuthatch (*Sitta carolinensis*), Ovenbird (*Seiurus aurocapillus*), Black-and-white Warbler (*Mniotilta varia*), Scarlet Tanager (*Piranga olivacea*), Great Crested Flycatcher (*Miarchus crinitus*), and Downy Woodpecker (*Picoides pubescens*).

**Associated Rare Plants:**

NONE KNOWN

**Associated Rare Animals:**

ELAPHE OBSOLETA

BLACK RAT SNAKE

E

**Examples with Public Access:** Rocky Mountain Park, Greenfield; Blue Hills Reservation, Milton.  
Holyoke Range – Skinner State Park, Granby..

**Threats:**

From: Swain, P.C. & J.B. Kearsley. 2001. Classification of the Natural Communities of Massachusetts. Version 1.3. Natural Heritage & Endangered Species Program, Division of Fisheries & Wildlife. Westborough, MA.

Natural Heritage & Endangered Species Program, Massachusetts Division of Fisheries & Wildlife

**Management Needs:**

**Synonyms**

**USNVC/TNC:** Quercus prinus - Quercus coccinea, Quercus velutina Forest Alliance -- Quercus prinus - Quercus (rubra, velutina) / Gaylussacia baccata forest [CEGL006282].

**MA (old name):** PART OF: SNE DRY OAK/PINE FORESTS ON ACIDIC BEDROCK OR TILL.

**ME:** Part of: Oak - pine Woodland Community.

**NH:** Part of: Appalachian oak- pine Rocky ridge Woodland /barren; and part of Semi-rich Appalachian oak-sugar maple forest.

**VT:** Part of: Dry oak Woodland.

**NY:** Chestnut oak forest.

**CT:** Part of: Quercus velutina - (Q. prinus) forests -- Quercus velutina / Gaylussacia baccata community

**RI:** Chestnut Oak forest.

**Weatherbee:** Not described.

**Author:** P. Swain

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